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Negativity, History, and the Organic Composition of Capital: Toward a Principle Theory of Transformation of Subjectivity in Japan¹

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Abstract

Japan, the third-largest economy in the world, is facing the sense of stagnation; hopelessness amid capitalist prosperity and flood of consumerist and pop cultures. Anne Allison recently called it "Precarious Japan" while Alexandre Kojève already identified it as a form of life after "the end of history" decades ago. This paper aimed to theoretically investigate the current Japanese social and mental situation, and develop a social-theoretical framework to elucidate it based on an integrated contemporary interpretation of Hegelian and Marxian concepts on human-being: the negativity, and socio-economic stages: the rise of organic composition of capital (OCC). The author constructed a following hypothesis as a conclusion. Through the rise of the OCC, the social character of labor is formed and developed not only in terms of the mental aspects of labor, but also as a source of social and historic imagination, in accordance with the development of capitalism. However, in a region like Japan where geographical movement of labor force over its borders does not occur, instead of being

exercised as a social and historic imagination toward a hopeful future vision, this faculty is fulfilled as: romantic imagination which goes introspectively, to a further dive into the interiority; or retrospectively, toward a nostalgic beautification of the past. An expression of this is the rise of the sphere of subculture in Japanese society. This could be regarded as a precursory symptom for developed capitalist countries.

Key words: Marx; Hegel; Heidegger; Kojève; Moishe Postone; Organic composition of capital; Transformation of subjectivity; Contemporary Japanese society and culture

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1. HOPE IS LOST, YET WHERE IS THE MULTITUDE?

"This country has everything. You can find whatever you want here. The only thing you can't find is hope."² These words are spoken about Japan by the protagonist in Ryu Murakami's novel *Exodus to a Country of Hope* (*Kibou no Kuni no Ekusodasu*), a middle-school student who has been summoned in front of a Japanese Parliament Lower House Budget Committee meeting as an unsworn

¹ The author made a presentation on this project at the *Critical Historical Studies Conference* (University of Chicago) in December 2011, and also has already published the Japanese abbreviated version of this paper on *Shakai Riron Kenkyuu (Journal of Social Theory)* No.14 from Shakai Riron Gakkai (International Society of Social Theory) in December 2013, in which the detailed depictions of the current situation of Japanese society are trimmed down based on the readers' background knowledge and understanding.

² Ryu Murakami, *Kibou no Kuni no Ekusodasu*, Bunshun Bunko, 2002, p. 314 (the first edition was published from Bugei-Shunjuusha in 2000). This novel is currently not available in English, but you can find Murakami's comments on 2011 Tōhoku earthquake and tsunami in Japan in the following article, in which he mentioned this novel. "Amid Shortages, a Surplus of Hope", *The New York Times*, March 16, 2011 (http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/17/opinion/17Murakami.html?_r=1)

witness. In the novel set in the year 2001-2008, (mainly) middle school age juveniles are in despair over their dysfunctional, obsolescent school education system, which is completely out-of-synch with contemporary Japan. They initiate “school refusals” (long-term truancy) on a massive scale – hundreds of thousands of students – and, using the internet to organize students nationally, go into business for themselves. These young entrepreneurs proceed to build their own futures, initially beginning with businesses such as environmental, community support, and nursing care fields, and later getting to the point where they establish an original local currency sphere on Hokkaido island, acquiring vast fortunes from currency trading via hedge funds. Murakami’s novel is based on his own minute and comprehensive research, and his sober awareness of the actual status of Japan’s stalling society. He poignantly depicts, with a touch of detached realism: a) the undercurrents of a Japanese society which cannot reconstitute itself in correspondence with the fluidity of globalized capital, and b) the abyssal depths of a sense of stagnation of the younger generation in Japan, trapped in a no exit situation.

Of course, *Exodus to a Country of Hope* was fiction, but there is a non-fictional critical essay by Tomohiro Akagi from 2007 that expresses a similar sense of stagnation among younger generations, consequently causing quite a stir in Japan, titled: “I want to slap Masao Maruyama³: A freeter⁴, 31 years old, and I hope for war”⁵. The thrust of this essay is its stark portrayal of the ennui of a young Japanese man in his early 30s who graduated from college during the “the employment ice age (1993-2005)”⁶, tried to get a job with permanent employment at different general companies, but failed. He has been working as “freeter” during night shifts, earning \$1000 per month – not enough to enable him strike out from home and become independent from his parents. He feels there are no prospects for a dramatic change in the course of his life, and no hope for having his own family and children.

³ Masao Maruyama (1914-1996) was a leading Japanese political scientist and political theorist. In March 1945, Maruyama was drafted and stationed as a private in the Japanese army at Hiroshima, although he was already an assistant professor at Tokyo University. The author, Akagi, is trying to convey that he admires the social mobility made possible during war time, in which even an elite Tokyo University professor could be slapped by superiors in the army.

⁴ “Freeter” is a Japanese expression for people between the ages of 15 and 34 who lack full time employment or are unemployed (excluding housewives and students).

⁵ Tomohiro Akagi, Maruyama Masao wo hippatakitai, 31 sai, freeter, kibou ha sensou, in *Ronza*, January 2007, Asahi Shinbunsha.

⁶ “The collapse of the asset bubble in the early 1990s and fallout from the technology burst in 2000 created what people in Japan call a hiring ‘ice age’ that forced the students who couldn’t secure work to hop between temporary jobs. The proportion of non-regular workers more than doubled between 1985 and 2008.” (“Japan ‘Ice Age’ Returns as Student Joblessness Soars to Record”, *Bloomberg*, March 12, 2010, <http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=newsarchive&sid=aSj9Cvt0AZHg>)

Akagi argues that Japanese society today provides everyone with a peaceful and stable life, without material hardship, but that this very situation is humiliating, and devoid of dignity and dreams – a spiritual hell. While retirees older than the “baby boomers” enjoy a leisurely life, the distortions of Japanese society are fobbed off on younger generations, who toil in a tenuous post bubble economy era where one false step could send them plunging headfirst into a no exit quagmire. This situation led Akagi, cursing the injustice between generations, to confess he hopes that war will break out, if only for its potential to enable social mobility.

It is not yet clear whether such a sense of stagnation, hopelessness, and disengagement from society – predominantly centered around younger generations – leads to any actual, concrete social crisis. The “Akihabara massacre”⁷ and other copycat cases that followed on its heels have been considered instances of this kind of sense of stagnation unleashed in the form of individual antisocial violence. Some who are hindered from self-realization in the real world production and reproduction process are pushed into unstable employment circumstances, and others become school refusers, or even hikikomori⁸ – losing their energy to venture out into the world. According to a survey, many Japanese high school students tend to suffer from acute depression, low motivation, and have a significantly low level of self-esteem⁹.

⁷ “The Akihabara massacre” was an incident of mass murder that took place on Sunday, June 8, 2008, in the Akihabara shopping district (for electronics, video games, and comics), the Mecca of otaku (obsessed hobbyists). The suspect, Tomohiro Kato, 25, hit a crowd in a pedestrian mall with a 2 ton rented truck, eventually killing three people and injuring two; he then stabbed at least 12 people using a dagger, killing four people and injuring eight. This is regarded as the worst mass murder incident in 30 years in Japan. Kato, who had been working as a temporary worker at an auto parts factory, is thought to have no friends, and was weary from his employment circumstances, which provided no continuity, expansivity, or communality. It is said that interactions on internet discussion boards rather deepened his feeling of isolation, and that before the attack he posted messages such as: “I am tired of my life. I want to be famous and appear on television talk shows.” It is reported by the Japanese National Police Agency that, apparent copycat criminals, similar cases, and similar false warnings by young people sharply increased after the incident (more than one hundred in one month).

⁸ “The Japanese Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare defines hikikomori as people who refuse to leave their house, and isolate themselves from society in their homes for a period exceeding six months. While the degree of the phenomenon varies on an individual basis, in the most extreme cases, some people remain in isolation for years, or even decades. Often hikikomori start out as school refusals, or futōkō in Japanese (the older term is tōkōkyōhi). The Ministry of Health estimates that approx. 50,000 hikikomori live in Japan, about one third of which are aged 30 and older (Larimer 2000)” (Wikipedia: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hikikomori>). However, this official figure from the government is considered to be the most conservative estimate. Another estimate by NHK Welfare Network in 2005 shows there are more than 1.6 million hikikomoris, increasing to more than 3 million if *quasi-hikikomoris*, who go outside occasionally, are included.

⁹ A survey published by Hitotsubashi Bungei Kyoiku Shinkoukai

At several points in the history of modern Japanese society, for example, the Great Depression in the 1930s, and in the years of confusion after Japan's defeat in World War II, young adults suffered from a far more serious employment situation than today due to recession. For older generations who actually experienced life during such periods, the younger generations of today probably appear too naive when they – while enjoying a life with adequate food, clothing, and housing – complain of their dissatisfaction, and desire for social recognition. Consider, however, that there is an underlying objective social and historical structure functioning in the background. In ignorance of this, some might only offer the younger generations a kind of spiritual whipping and/or encouragement when it comes to their feelings of hopelessness and stagnation, but this does not help them cope. By itself, the fact we are in a sluggish economy does not provide any persuasive explanation of the mechanism of the mental hardships younger generations today are experiencing. The essential problem is that people are deprived of the opportunity to connect their own power to society, while: social capital continues to be more accumulated than ever; the total amount of knowledge and information available for individuals has significantly increased; communication technologies have developed; and the potentiality of any individuals to relate themselves to a universal human society is exponentially increasing. In Marxian economics, this is the so-called problem of relative surplus-population (reserve army of labour); this is a quantitative matter in general, but a *qualitative* problem is also occurring here due to the continuing development of globalisation. We are transforming into a global subject. The transformation is, however, still mid-process, we are in the middle of labor pains. Theoretical approaches to this problem of qualitative transformation of subjectivity have just started to take form.

Enter Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri: in their popular book *Empire*¹⁰, they argue from a platform based on Marxist vision that a new kind of subject – called ‘multitude’ – is being formed against the background of the post-modern global unification of societies, economies, and cultures. According to their theory, thanks to the global development of mature capitalism, the outside disappeared and “the plane of immanence”¹¹, a world filled with powers, has been opened up. Therefore, subjects are emerging on earth that are able to own

and use capitalism's powers of civilization, science, technology, knowledge, and information as their own, without the mediation of nation. So it is here the human subject will appear who can actively configure all the domains of the political, the social, the economic, and the biotic, as their own life – although Empire will naturally seek to deter this effort by limiting the freedom of people's ambulations, administering their labor time, and maintaining people as a mere multitude of discrete individuals. Hardt/Negri understand that there is no “outside” anymore, since capitalism is constituting Empire as a truly global economic order, and consequently the capabilities of individuals mediated and amplified by civilization is flowing back to them as their own “constituent power”.

The program that Hardt/Negri's Empire proposes is that the “universal individuals”¹², which Marx once said are formed through global social intercourse, can transform themselves into revolutionary subjects against Empire when they become aware of themselves as a part of the “multitude”. A distinctive characteristic of their theory is that they argue the trajectory of capital will realize a qualitative transformation of subjects. However, can it really be said that the emancipation of such energy or power can be realized only through an awareness of being such a multitude subject, the security of global civil rights, and basic subsistence income (“a citizenship income”¹³) as Hardt/Negri proposed? How can we be guaranteed that what is supposed to be a “constituent power” is not actually a constituted power? It might be possible to regard the 1999 protests against the WTO Ministerial Conference in Seattle, the 2010-11 Arab Spring, the Occupy Wall Street movement of 2011 and, if you like, even the 2011 England riots, as expressions of multitude revolutions. However in Japan, for example, as yet there seems to be no indication of a common acknowledgement, let alone resonating actions against situations, even as a sense of stagnation and lack of hope is rampant especially among younger generations as previously stated, while a significantly high suicide rate is persistent among middle-aged adults and seniors (especially males)¹⁴ and individual blowoffs of violence

Foundation and Nihon Seishonen Kenkyuujō Institute in February 2011 shows that feelings of self-worth among Japanese high school students are outstandingly low compared to students in the U.S., China, and Korea; the response rate to the statement: “I am a worthwhile person” was 57.2% in the U.S., 42.2% in China, 20.2% in Korea, and only 7.5% in Japan. Most Japanese students feel “depressed and in low spirits” and “feel myself to be worthless”. <http://www1.odn.ne.jp/youth-study/> (Japanese only).

¹⁰ Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire*, Harvard University Press, 2000.

¹¹ *ibid.* p. 71.

¹² Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology* (ca.1845), Part I, A, “5. Development of the Productive Forces as a Material Premise of Communism”. (<http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/german-ideology/ch01a.htm>)

¹³ Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, p.403.

¹⁴ Since 1998, the annual number of suicides has exceeded 30,000 in Japan, with the highest peak in the post war period. Japan has one of the world's highest suicide rates (two times greater than the U.S.), especially amongst industrialized nations (the highest both among G8 and OECD countries), and the Japanese government reported the rate for 2006 as being the ninth highest in the world. The announced annual number by National Police Agency is yet considered to be one of most conservative estimates, and it is said there are more than ten times suicide attempts than actual number. The survey revealed that most suicides are men (71% in 2007) and there is almost no significant fluctuations for the female rate through the decades, while

by cornered sprits are occasionally seen. In Japan, where is the multitude?

Hardt/Negri's narrative boldly heralds the appearance of a new form of the world, Empire, and, at the same time, the birth of a new mode of subjectivity, multitude, while citing a variety of sundry phenomenon and classics as evidence. Yet, their oracle-like work fails to provide any rigorous theoretical grounding for itself. On the whole, it sounds rather like a call for the coming of the Messiah, resembling somewhat the prophetic expectations of early Marx for a proletarian revolution. A sorely needed theoretical framework containing a critique of the political economy of the mature Marx seems to have been abandoned by Hardt/Negri, even while they imply that they were essentially inspired by the *Outlines of the Critique of Political Economy 1857-58* (*Grundrisse*, hereinafter). Furthermore, even Slavoj Žižek, who sharply criticises Hardt/Negri calling himself a materialist-Leninist, tends to use Christian metaphors like "Holy Spirit" and "space of a collective of believers" when discussing this currently generating dimension, and the subjectivity which belongs to it¹⁵. Unfortunately, these kinds of theories are incapable of providing an intrinsic critical theory about the sense of stagnation and lack of hope which holds Japanese society captive. To solve the problem of this gap between theory and reality, this discussion will reconsider the process of the generation of Marx's "different subject"¹⁶ from a "trajectory of capital" and the subjective effect of this process on its very subject.

2. A DIFFERENT SUBJECT

The "different subject" is the "social individual"¹⁷ which Marx sketched in *Grundrisse*. It is the individual who is liberated from the "appropriation of living labor"¹⁸ by capital – the human being released from subordination to the "organic composition of capital"¹⁹

the rate of middle aged males apparently corresponds to changes in the economic situation. (cf. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Suicide_in_Japan)

¹⁵ Slavoj Žižek uses Hegel's idea of "the concrete universal" as a key concept to express a Christian revolutionary subject (*The Parallax View*, MIT Press, 2006, pp. 103-111. "The comedy of incarnation"). Žižek, reverting to Kantianism, replaces this subject who places himself in a space of the "concrete universal" with the "singular universality", which is a direct coupling of singularity and universality, and relates it to an immediate social productivity in Marx's *Grundrisse*. Žižek uses the central dogma of Christianity to express an image of this "singular universality". "This space of singular universality is what, within Christianity, appears as the 'Holy Spirit'—the space of a collective of believers subtracted from the field of organic communities, or of particular life-world ('neither Greeks nor Jews') (*First As Tragedy, Then As Farce*, Verso, 2009, p. 105).

¹⁶ Karl Marx, *Grundrisse*, Penguin Books, 1973, p.712.

¹⁷ *ibid.*, p.705.

¹⁸ *ibid.*, p.703.

¹⁹ Karl Marx, *Capital vol.I*, Penguin Books, 1976, p.762.

which constitutes large-scale industry. Then and there, Marx predicted, human beings would live lives released from the contradictions constituted by the disparity between the abundance of material "real wealth"²⁰ produced by science and knowledge, and the wealth of (exchange) value based on the "superfluous labor time"²¹ squeezed out of the organic composition of capital. As long as social constitutions are totally subsumed in the organic composition of capital, however, workers become fettered in ever fragmenting, more vacant, and still prolonged labor, in the middle of the great material wealth produced by capitalist production. The organic composition of capital, that is, the composition of variable capital (living labor) and constant capital (dead labor), requires the "social characteristics [die gesellschaftlichen Charaktere]"²² of human labor in order to produce surplus-value, while mechanized large-scale industry is gradually making the direct human labor of workers unnecessary. In that meaning, we are potentially becoming able to enjoy a truly rich life filled with "disposable time"²³. Under the constitution of capitalist mode of production, i.e., under the capitalist relation of productive forces and production relations, however, this extra time does not appear as the "disposable time". It only emerges for capitalists as "superfluous labor time" – as the simple opposite of "socially necessary labor time" – which capital requires to reproduce its own organic composition. Generally speaking, it is not even recognized by workers. It is the life of capital, and therefore, the life of workers, as long as they are subsumed in the organic composition of capital as proletariats. If it is removed, the dynamic of capital comes to a standstill. This is the very reason why it is so difficult for someone located within this organic composition of capital to conceive of its abolition.

The process of reproduction of capital as capital intrinsically contains contradiction, according to Marx, since it continues to require direct human labor as a source of surplus-value, whereas it continuously makes direct human labor increasingly unnecessary through the necessary development of scientific and mechanized production systems for continuous production of surplus-value. The result is that "living labor" becomes "dead labor" and vice versa "dead labor" becomes "living labor". More accurately, the social character of human labor, that is, the faculty of organizing production which is being subsumed in the organic composition of capital, is transferred into the machinery system, and becomes per se increasingly unnecessary for the production process. Workers, whose social character is no longer required in the sphere of production, would exercise it, instead, in the act of consumption, and come to support the reproduction

²⁰ *Grundrisse, ibid.*, p.708.

²¹ *ibid.*, p.706.

²² Marx, *Capital vol.I*, p.164.

²³ Marx, *Grundrisse*, p.708.

process of capital. Accompanying the development of capitalism, a developed consumer society will appear. Withdrawal of the social character of human labor from the sphere of production, and its shift to that of the consumption is a normal trajectory of social constitutions, based on the capitalist mode of production.

In *Capital*, Marx begins with describing the equality of each of the double characters of commodity and labor, which implies the interaction of both. The dual character of commodity – use value and exchange value, is originally derived from the dual character of human labor – material character (processing natural materials) and social character (cooperation). However, conversely, in a developed capitalist society where commodity has already become a medium totally permeating the society, the subjects become the providers of labor force commodity, which is to be subsumed into the organic composition of capital, under the influence of the fetish character of the commodity's dualism. This is because, as Marx said, social relations are reified in commodities²⁴. In the eyes of a subject who is born and raised in a capitalist society, these social relations, which are incarnated into commodities, appear to glow with an aura. No subjects can flee from this magical power. Various knowledge, technologies, and forms of cooperation, which were used to produce it, and could be regarded as an immense amount of labor time, i.e., value, are invested into a commodity. A subject, who has grown up in a society where social relations are constituted by the medium of the (exchange) value, has naturally developed eyes that recognize the value in a commodity. This is a social adjustment. Most subjects gravitate to the aura of commodities, and unavoidably end up deciding to make themselves wage laborers, and sell their own time as wage labor. Some other subjects decide to rejoin this reproduction process of aura through commodity production, taking up the position of capitalists. To avoid this “salto mortale”²⁵ (mortal jump) is virtually impossible for a subject since it would mean to become a social misfit.

What kind of human being is capable of breaking this chain of circulation? When, and how, would emancipation come? In concrete terms this question – regarding the

when and the how remains after all unanswered in both early and late Marx²⁶. He simply alluded to a faint vision of a possible mode of a “different subject”. In my middle-term project, nevertheless, I would like to think about what kind of human this could be, and how, and to what extent, we are actually approaching this phenomenon in our current situation by examining Marx's analysis of the trajectory of capital. In order to do that, this paper will reexamine the implications of the “social character” of labor, tracing up until Marx, passing through Marx, and extending down beyond Marx. This “social character” of labor is, from the viewpoint of today's thought, a dimension of the social imagination of human beings, and its origin could be said to be in the imaginary power of the mirror stage in terms of psychoanalysis. It is a subsumption of this “social character” into production that is the source of the contradictory dynamic of capital, and therefore the dynamic of history. Although capital, out of its own tendencies, is gradually withdrawing from direct appropriation of the social character of labor since the establishment of large-scale industry, it continues to need to detain direct human labor in order to produce surplus-value. Since the process of subsumption of labor's social character into production is the process of modernization, when this process approaches its limit, the process of modernization (and with it, the process of history), will end. In this sense, to think about what the “different subject” is, is to think about what the human being after the end of history will be.

3. HISTORY AND NEGATIVITY

I shall return to Hegel momentarily to reconsider the relationship of Marx's “social character” of labor and history. It would be an important step to discover a relationship between the characteristics of negativity and the dynamic of history in Hegel in order to see a post-historic and post-capitalistic mode of Marx's “social character”. As we shall see below, negativity in Hegel is the primordial that generates time and, and simultaneously, the origin of its negativity is a dimension of preconscious assimilation where human subjective consciousness is developed. As Alexandre Kojève discussed, the key to an elucidation of the nature of a connection between the characteristics of negativity, human labor and history lies in Hegel's philosophy, that is, in its relationship between the movement of Spirit (Geist) (which contains negativity in it) and history²⁷.

²⁴ *Capital*, vol. I, Chapter 1, Section 4: “The Fetishism of the Commodity and Its Secret”.

²⁵ *Capital*, vol. I, p. 200. Kojin Karatani, a well-known Japanese literary critic, understands this “salto mortale” as a point of junction of the production process and the circulation process. Based on this understanding, explicitly going back to Proudhonism, he shaped and implemented a movement by workers as consumers that overcomes the dominance of nation by means of a type of LETS (Local Exchange Trading System). This movement was named NAM (New Associationalist Movement) and commenced in 2000, aiming for a revolution in/from circulation sphere through an implementation of the local currency “Q”, but broke up in 2003 mainly because of its unsuccessful human relationships and management (to be continued in *Appendix 1* at the end of the paper.). Cf. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kojin_Karatani.

²⁶ Naturally he talked about “revolution” – more often earlier, and later, less. Yet we have absolutely no idea what kind of revolution it should be now, in the twenty-first century, after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the capitalization of China. This, precisely, is the issue.

²⁷ Alexandre Kojève, *Introduction à la lecture de Hegel : Leçons sur la Phénoménologie de l'Esprit, professées de 1933 à 1939 à l'École des Hautes-Études, réunies et publiées par Raymond Queneau*,

Speaking of the relationship between the movement of Spirit and history, Heidegger once criticized Hegel's concept of time and history in terms of its relation to Spirit at the very end of his discontinued project: Being and Time, as follows:

Hegel's 'construction' was prompted by his arduous struggle to conceive the 'concretion' of the spirit. He makes this known in the following sentence from the concluding chapter of his *Phenomenology of Spirit*: 'Thus time appears as the very fate and necessity which spirit has when it is not in itself complete: the necessity of its giving self-consciousness a richer share in consciousness, of its setting in motion the immediacy of the "in-itself" (the form in which substance is in consciousness), or, conversely, of its realizing and making manifest the "in-itself" taken as the inward (and this is what first is inward)—that is, of vindicating it for its certainty of itself.'

Our existential analytic of Dasein, on the contrary, starts with the 'concretion' of factically thrown existence itself in order to unveil temporality as that which primordially makes such existence possible. 'Spirit' does not first fall into time, but it exists as the primordial temporalizing of temporality. Temporality temporalizes world-time, within the horizon of which 'history' can 'appear' as historicizing within-time. 'Spirit' does not fall into time; but factual existence 'falls' as falling from primordial, authentic temporality. This 'falling' ["Fallen"], however, has itself its existential possibility in a mode of its temporalizing—a mode which belongs to temporality.²⁸

What Heidegger is saying here is something like this: Hegel gives primacy to the abstract and necessary development of Spirit in the course of *Phenomenology*, and only after the full development of it is Spirit finally put into a concrete dimension of time at the very end of the book. The unfolding of logical forms of Spirit should be put first, and then, Hegel tries to throw the movement of Spirit into temporality in order to fill out the vacancy of the form of Spirit, and give it a concrete thickness and richness. This, from Heidegger's point of view, is totally inverted. Since Hegel's time is a negation of negation, that is, an abstract time, Spirit could not obtain a concrete phase, even if he put Spirit into it. According to Heidegger, human spirit is, from the beginning, in a rich and original temporality, and that temporality is itself a deep and abundant primordial from which subjectivity rather could drop off. That is the entire problem of human spirit.

This reading of Hegel by Heidegger is surprisingly incorrect. Hegel never said that Spirit falls into time. Hegel is, instead, saying at that point of *Phenomenology* that time is generated from the movement of Spirit, which means he is talking about the spirituality of time.

If we put aside the kind of prejudice that accuses Hegel of disguising theological themes with his philosophical terms, and understand Hegel's thought as that which is trying to conceive the historical dynamic of modern society, and if we understand his Spirit as a representation of the movement of modern society (even though his trial is inferior to the historicism of Marx's critique of political economy), then it becomes possible to conclude that Hegel argued that time is produced from the very dynamic of modern society.

Attempts are often made to understand the unfolding of narratives in *Phenomenology of Spirit* in accordance with the development of logical forms in *Science of Logic* or *The Encyclopaedia Logic*, or, to understand it as a tracing down of the developmental history of human mind. Those attempts fail to understand the very nature of the book of *Phenomenology*. Hegel thinks that logic and history emerge from the movement of Spirit. Hegel is composing *Phenomenology* based on the idea that when human consciousness relates (reflects) self-recursively its own multilayered or multidimensional composition, the movement of the Spirit as a supra-individual constitution is generated there. This occurs before the genesis of the system of sciences, which itself results from the movement of this Spirit. Logic, nature and history appear at the end of the discourse of *Phenomenology*.²⁹ Thus time and history are created as the result of the movement of Spirit, or as a trajectory of it. So it is not that there is a kind of primordial temporality, and then spirit falls into or out of it. The contents of Spirit that Hegel is describing are, after all, nothing but a trajectory of the development of forms that modern consciousness holds. Being self-conscious of its own trajectory means, according to Hegel, to be absolute knowledge. We could conclude from all of the above that history in Hegel's philosophy is a product of the movement of the modernized self. That is, Hegel was talking about the historicity of history or time. Heidegger took a wrong turn, since he postulates a primordial temporality and assumes it still is a temporality. The primordium of time should not be time. It should be something different from time. Hegel called it negativity.

Yes Hegel does make a significant omission, compared to Marx, in that he never articulated what it is that drives the movement of Spirit, i.e., of the unfolding of narratives of *Phenomenology*. Readers are often left wondering what is realizing the transitions between chapters, or simply just cannot understand the necessity of the transition. Why does Consciousness become Self-consciousness? And how does Self-consciousness become Reason? Hegel tried to place logical explanations at each point of the transition, but these often seem insufficient, without being supplemented by reader's speculation or imagination.

Gallimard, 1968, p. 575. (This part is not included in the English abbreviated translation by James H. Nichols, Jr [1969], *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel: Lectures on the Phenomenology of Spirit*, Cornell University Press, 1980). As I shall later state (in the section 4), Kojève ties too strongly Hegel's conception of *negativity* to the concept of *death*.

²⁸ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, translated by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, 1962, p. 486.

²⁹ G.W.F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Mind*, translated by J.B. Baillie, Dover Publications, Inc., 2003, pp. 474-476. [Suhrkamp, *Werke*, Bd.3, S. 588-591]

Since the twentieth century, including a major work by Adorno, many thinkers pointed out that the negativity is functioning as a driving force in the unfolding movement of Hegel's Spirit. It can be said, in the meantime, that there are two kinds of negativity in Phenomenology. Firstly, there is the negativity of the object facing to consciousness. The outside object apparently shows its external negativity against consciousness (negativity I). But this negativity of objects is not capable of enduring the negativity of consciousness (negativity II). It is this negativity II, the negativity of consciousness, which plays an apparent leading role in the movement of Hegel's Spirit. This is a faculty of consciousness, in that consciousness: takes in objects into itself, negates the otherness of these objects (negativity I), and internalizes them. No external objects can resist this negativity of consciousness (negativity II). That is the fundamental thesis in Phenomenology. Consciousness internalizes every extrinsic object, and makes it its own property. At the same time, the negativity of consciousness works on consciousness itself. Consciousness digs into the multilayered composition which it already holds in itself as a social consciousness, comprehends it explicitly, and acquires it as its own properties bit by bit. This self-reflective negativity is essential for consciousness to become a self-consciousness, a truly human consciousness – transcending being just a natural consciousness. Hegel thinks that the interaction with the negativity of the other consciousness is required for consciousness, so that negativity II of a consciousness is bent and pointed back on itself. Hegel explains it as in "The above general independent nature [consciousness], however, in the case of which negation takes the form of absolute negation, is the species as such, or as self-consciousness. Self-consciousness attains its satisfaction only in another self-consciousness"³⁰. Hegel is shaping a mechanism there in which subjects who acquire an external view point from which to see themselves is generated; negativity II, which tries to take in others, clashes with each other, permeates each other, and then results in becoming self-consciousness.

Negativity is just a term that appears only occasionally, and actually never became one of the outstanding main themes in Hegel's work. Hegel didn't leave behind any detailed or organized descriptions about the functions and classifications of these negativities. The explanation and classification above is of my own authorship, and is just an extracted product from the way of unfolding of Phenomenology pursuing the principle of its development.

Therefore, the relation between negativity I and negativity II is not necessarily clear, and the differentiation between them is just a provisional one. When we provisionally grasp the negativities at work

in Phenomenology as classified above, the following two problems are revealed, which are the fundamental problems of Hegel's philosophy. Firstly, if the negativity of consciousness (negativity II) is capable of internalizing any objects and making them itself after all, why is consciousness not Spirit or Absolute Knowledge from the beginning? This problem implies the possibility of the backwardness of consciousness. Secondly, what is the momentum for consciousness to become self-consciousness, i.e., an occasion by which negativity II is turned toward consciousness itself? It seems there is a kind of negativity that can bend the negativity of consciousness. It seems another kind of negativity (negativity III), which is functionally different from the negativity II, is working there³¹.

Now we are left with three kinds of negativities³². Though it is unnecessary to further allow these kinds of negativities to proliferate, Phenomenology at least should be read in a way in which there is some kind of negative ground from which consciousness emerges, but which consciousness cannot easily render into itself, and through the unavoidable struggle with this negative ground, consciousness will generate and develop as Spirit. This philosophical wrestling of Hegel with that kind of negativity fascinated Marx, and led him to the insight that a space called society which is neither the consciousness nor the objects, yet includes a unique dynamic – was born in the modern era in a form of capitalism. Thought by which to elucidate what the ground is has been required since then. All of the later significant criticisms of Hegel's Phenomenology are after all, accusations

³¹ It is also a paramount question of philosophy whether this negativity III could (or could not) be identified with the negativity I that external objects hold. Some may think, regarding principle of unfolding history, that consciousness is transformed as it meets the negativity of matter, and this is Marxian historical materialism. I disagree, though. I rather consider that negativity III is first generated, and then negativity I and II are consequently generated as an oppositional set of modern subject and object. This scheme could be elaborated based on Marx's insights in *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*. Judith Butler and Slavoj Žižek understand Hegel's negativity is ultimately a negativity of corporeality or the real. However, if one lacks a theoretical grounding in the dimension of human desire, one loses an essential foothold for a historical theory of the dynamic composition of capitalism, since it is not the negativity of the material thing that is working at the core of the composition of capital. This is one of the reasons why Žižek, whose theory is not following the line of Kojèvean theory – the dimension of human desire, but rather Lacanian – the return of the oppressed, cannot adequately picture a relationship between the trajectory of capital and the transformation of subjectivity. Cf. Judith Butler, *Subjects of Desire*, Columbia University Press, 1987 and Slavoj Žižek, *First As Tragedy, Then As Farce*, Verso, 2009. See also Appendix 2.

³² Dieter Henrich also discusses that negativity appears three times in Hegel's philosophy, although his way of articulating this is different from that used this paper. Dieter Henrich, "Hegels Grundoperation, eine Einleitung in die 'Wissenschaft der Logik'" in *Der Idealismus und seine Gegenwart* (hrsg. von Ute Guzzoni u.a., Felix Meiner, 1976), S. 217-18.

³⁰ *ibid.*, p. 103. (translation amended.) [Suhrkamp, Werke, Bd.3, S. 144]

against the seeming incapability or inefficiency of his way of handling this ground. Schelling wrote *Of Human Freedom* two years after Hegel's *Phenomenology* as an implicit criticism towards it, in which he started his later inclination toward a "positive philosophy" which aims for a direct grasp of "Grund (ground)" from which human consciousness emerges and on which Hegel never directly commented³³. Marx criticized Hegel in *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* of 1844, arguing that Hegel ended up in an inversion/absurdity (*Verkehrtheit*) that self-comprehension of Spirit becomes the negation of the negation, and the "species-being"³⁴ which is actually a rich and concrete universal is converted into vacant logical forms precisely because Hegel starts with the negativity of consciousness. (As I discuss further later, mature Marx showed that Hegel's idealistic inversion is actually an expression of a social form of capitalist society.)

Hegel having posited man as equivalent to self-consciousness, the estranged object – the estranged essential reality of man – is nothing but consciousness, the thought of estrangement merely – estrangement's abstract and therefore empty and unreal expression, negation. The supersession of the alienation is therefore likewise nothing but an abstract, empty supersession of that empty abstraction – the negation of the negation. The rich, living, sensuous, concrete activity of self-objectification is therefore reduced to its mere abstraction, absolute negativity – an abstraction which is again fixed as such and considered as an independent activity – as sheer activity. Because this so-called negativity is nothing but the abstract, empty form of that real living act, its content can in consequence be merely a formal content produced by abstraction from all content. As a result therefore one gets general, abstract forms of abstraction pertaining to every content and on that account indifferent to, and, consequently, valid for, all content – the thought-forms or logical categories torn from real mind and from real nature.³⁵

Heidegger argued, as previously mentioned, that Hegel's Spirit needs to fall into temporality to avoid its abstract and empty negativity³⁶. Adorno advocated a "negative dialectics" to escape from Hegel's oppressive identical positivity as the negation of the negation, and stay in the abundance of the negativity. Each of these criticisms has a point. All of these may be attributed to the fact that Hegel did not uncover what the source of negativity III is which causes the unfolding of Spirit. Negativity III, which could negate the negativity of consciousness, should be something different from simple matter, since any simple material object cannot resist the

negativity of consciousness³⁷. Negativity III should be, of course, another kind of negativity than the negativity II of consciousness, but at the same time it should be ultimately internalized (appropriated) by the negativity II of consciousness. The exact relationship between negativity II and III remains a matter of examination, though it cannot be accomplished here. Instead, I leave two brief remarks. Firstly, Hegel's notions (such as his "determinate negation" and "concrete universality") imply that negativity III could precede negativity II. Secondly, it could be helpful to picture negativity II as an abstract negativity and negativity III as a concrete negativity.

Hegel just held back from a further detailed investigation of negativity III hiding behind the motion of Spirit, and that is the very methodology of *Phenomenology*. He supposedly judged that such an investigation was beyond him and the age in which he was living. In fact, the philosophy of Schelling, which tried to accomplish that very investigation in the same age, unavoidably became almost mythical in its tone. It was an immensely difficult challenge for philosophy for which nobody could find a solution until Marx, and in his case, from a totally different point of view i.e., he approached it from the standpoint of a critique of political economy based on historical materialism. In a nutshell, the task is to grasp the multilayered constitution of human consciousness and elucidate the origin of the emergence of consciousness. The structure of *Phenomenology* is carefully composed specifically to avoid answering this difficult problem. Hegel begins with the already-generated consciousness, employing a methodology with which he is going to extract a variety of forms of consciousness from a diversity of experiences of consciousness. A further investigation as to how and why human consciousness has such a multidimensional structure is completely put aside there. If the phenomena of consciousness could be organized, and thereby systemize a whole of experience and knowledge about the world, then philosophy would have accomplished a suitable task in that age – the construction of a grounded system of sciences, Hegel thought.

His methodology was a great success in that age, but at the same time, it nevertheless contained a considerable flaw. In order to mend this flaw, Hegel had to make a rather tricky assertion about history. As previously explained, Hegel, in *Phenomenology*, argues that history will emerge from the movement of Spirit. That could be interpreted to mean that Hegel is implicitly indicating the historicity of history, that is, if you grasp Hegel's Spirit as the historical movement of modern human society. On the other hand, he also declared that history is the true

³³ F.W.J. Schelling, *Philosophical Inquiries into the Nature of Human Freedom* (1809), trans. James Gutmann, Open Court Publishing Company, 2003.

³⁴ Karl Marx, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* (1844), *Third Manuscript*, Critique of the Hegelian Dialectic and Philosophy as a Whole, XXVII (<http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1844/manuscripts/hegel.htm>) translated by Martin Mulligan in 1959.

³⁵ *ibid.*, XXXI. 'Self-consciousness' in Marx seems to corresponding with 'consciousness' in Hegel.

³⁶ Heidegger, *ibid.*

³⁷ Remember that even Marx did not advocate a kind of simple materialism in this way. Yet there could be another opinion on this point, as I previously stated in footnote 31, a position which argues that the power of the material is a motor of history.

“Theodicaea” (theodicy), in the very last sentences of his *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*.

That the History of the World, with all the changing scenes which its annals present, is this process of development and the realization of Spirit – this is the true Theodicaea, the justification of God in History. Only this insight can reconcile Spirit with the History of the World – viz., that what has happened, and is happening every day, is not only not “without God,” but is essentially His Work.³⁸

With saying that about history, Hegel’s history as the movement of Spirit could become associated with divine nature. This seems to prevent our intention to understand Hegel’s history in a historicist way. Yet if we patiently follow the development of his entire line of discussion in the lectures, Hegel said it – history is the true theodicy – in order to mean that we need a kind of negativity in order to recognize the movement of history, and, here is the crucial point, only Christianity, especially Protestantism, can truly capture or cultivate that kind of negativity within the human subject.

As to negativity and history/time, Hegel had already discussed the topics in *Phenomenology* along the following lines: Spirit should get out of itself to truly know itself, but since Spirit is the whole world itself, there is no outside of it. If there is anything extrinsic, it should not be the outside as space, but one as time. Hegel says if there is a self which is externalized into the outside when Spirit externalizes (entäußern) itself as nature, there should be something to opposite to it which should be called a “pure self (reines Selbst)”³⁹. It could be regarded as a necessary gap or disparity (negativity) for Spirit to carve out itself outside of itself, a self who is looking at a carved-out self, and also a self who is going to take the carved-out self back. This pure self is “time (Zeit)”⁴⁰. History is said to be “externalized and emptied into Time”.

The other aspect, however, in which Spirit comes into being, History, is the process of becoming in terms of knowledge, a conscious self-mediating process – Spirit externalized and emptied into Time. But this form of abandonment is, similarly, the emptying of itself by itself; the negative is negative of itself.⁴¹

(Die andere Seite aber seines Werdens, die Geschichte, ist das wissende sich vermittelnde Werden – der an die Zeit entäußerte Geist; aber diese Entäußerung ist ebenso die Entäußerung ihrer selbst; das Negative ist das Negative seiner selbst.)

This externalization is called the externalization of the externalization itself, and Hegel said the negative

is the negative against the negative itself. This excreted negativity is not a kind of negativity coming from outside of human mind but the negativity from the human mind itself, since there is no outside of Spirit. Consciousness becomes able to look at itself from the outside, that is, it becomes able to internalize the movement of itself, due to this negativity. Therefore Hegel also called this the “pure self (reines Selbst)”. It is a principle of self-transcending and also of self-internalization. You can internalize the whole movement of yourself, which is the world per se, only from an outside point of view in this meaning. In this way, Hegel explained in *Phenomenology* that time is generated from the negativity built in somewhere in human mind.

The reason why history is called a true theodicy in *Philosophy of History* is that Hegel supposes that the negativity would be internalized in subjects only by the Reformation in modern Europe – specifically, only by Protestantism in German nations. Hegel called this “the principle of interiority (das Prinzip der Innerlichkeit)”⁴². Thus Hegel found within history the origin of the negativity which enables the comprehension of history – the birth of Protestantism as a historical incident. This seems a kind of circular theory. But, for Hegel, it is the philosophical thrust to provide for the dynamic of history a meaning by connecting the significance of both appearance of the modern nation and Christianity (Protestantism), finding a reconciliation between religious and secular consciences there, and seeing there the summit of history that is as a process of realization of freedom and faith. Otherwise, Hegel would say, history as a human’s narrative of itself would be able to undermine itself by the negativity of consciousness per se, and end up in a Buddhist-like-nihilism. Hegel’s discussion that the process of history reaches its summit through the negativity generated by Protestantism is intended to neutralize the strong autotoxic side-effect of negativity of human mind. In this way, Hegel discovered the source of the historical dynamic of modern society at the negativity found in the depths of human mind, but didn’t make any further investigations into what it actually might be. He just posited the movement generated by it as Spirit or History. The only historical and social clues he was capable of using to affirm and depict the existence of that dynamism was the German state and Protestantism, in contrast to Marx.

Let me refute Heidegger’s claim again, and summarize this section. Hegel’s theoretical constructions in *Phenomenology* imply that the movement of Spirit is unfolded by negativity III functioning at the bottom of human mind. It can be said that the consciousness that emerges from this negativity III becomes negativity

³⁸ Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, translated by J. Sibree (<http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/hegel/works/hil/lectures4.htm#s39>). [Suhrkamp, *Werke*, Bd.12, S. 540]

³⁹ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, p.475. [Suhrkamp, *Werke*, Bd.3, S.590]

⁴⁰ *ibid.*

⁴¹ *ibid.* This English translation by Baillie should be amended. The newest translation by Terry Pinkard is almost the same. See also the original German text I give below. [Suhrkamp, *Werke*, Bd.3, S.590.]

⁴² Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, (Translation amended. J. Sibree translated this “the principle of Subjectivity”.) [Suhrkamp, *Werke*, Bd.12, S.520.]

II (abstracting negativity), and when consciousness objectified its own movements with its abstract negativity II in a self-mediating way, history emerges. In this sense, time is born from something different from time, and this is the only thinking by which a historical theory of temporality becomes possible, which is impossible in the early Heidegger's scheme (actually, it remains impossible in late Heidegger as well, but due to other reasons), since he assumes the primordial temporality is still a temporality. Primordial time is not time. It is something coming from human mind and something concrete compared to the abstract negativity of consciousness generated from it. I would say it is the concrete negativity or the concrete universality. Time is always and already the abstracted. Therefore, the word "abstract time"⁴³ is already a redundant term, but it is true that only after we become able to imagine a social form other than a current capitalist form, we could say there is something like a concrete time which becomes an abstract time through some sort of form of mediation, but actually, it was even not time before the abstraction. Thus we can explain how Heidegger's philosophy lost a chance to be a truly critical theory against modern society by failing to think of the historicity of temporality in a really radical way, to the extent that Hegel does. The biggest shortcoming of Hegel's constitution compared to Marx is, on the other hand, that he didn't pay attention to the historical and social forms of the mediation that enable that self-mediation. Why is Consciousness not Self-consciousness from the beginning? Why is there a process of generation? Hegel does not answer these questions. Marx's critique of Hegel, if I may speak for him, is the following: negativity (or universality) is first formed and developed as a concrete negativity or concrete universality. It is developed by a social and historical form, but, at the same time, its social and historical form gradually transforms this concrete negativity into an abstract negativity, by means of its own characteristics. This process of transformation is history. From the Hegelian side, it can be said that there is a self-abstracting negativity. The plurality of negativity in Hegelian philosophy should be understood in this way. From the Marxian side, on the other hand, it can be said that a self-abstraction of negativity is possible due to a historically specific form. This social and historical form is the organic composition of capital – an unprecedented concept of Marx.

⁴³ I borrowed these words from a work by Moishe Postone (University of Chicago), *Time, Labor, and Social Domination*. Postone defines the universal unit or medium for the exchange value in the capitalist production generated from the mediation of "socially necessary time" as the "abstract time". My paper owes a good deal to Postone's theory about the insight into the relation between trajectory of the organic composition of capital and time. Cf. Moishe Postone, *Time, Labor and Social Domination: A reinterpretation of Marx's critical theory*, Cambridge University Press, 1994.

4. TRAJECTORY OF "ORGANIC COMPOSITION OF CAPITAL" IN MARX

A working assumption of this paper is that negativity III, which is the source of the dynamic of Spirit and/or History in Hegel, represents the same thing as the "social character" of labor in Marx⁴⁴. In the preceding section, it was maintained that Hegel did not pursue an inquiry into the nature of this negativity III. Actually, neither did Marx. However, Marx theoretically grounded a trajectory of self-movement driven by this negativity by means of a social and historical form. This form is the "organic composition of capital". A basic formula by which to understand the variety of individual historical modes of subject in the historic trajectory of capital should be: the subsumption of the "social character" of labor by the "organic composition of capital" and its release. For additional insight, we shall reconsider what Marx's organic composition of capital is – and especially what "variable capital" in that composition is – by introducing a point of view from our review of Hegel's negativity above. This will grant us deeper understanding of the transformation of subject in the trajectory of capital. "Variable capital" is that which is historically formed and historically dissolved, and its process of formation and dissolution is actually nothing other than history itself.

According to Capital, human labor as a commodity has a use value and an exchange value corresponding to the fact that a commodity has both. Yet, originally, it is because of the nature of human labor that a commodity has both use value and exchange value. As human labor comes to perform its nature as an abstract medium, the commodity begins to show its abstract nature as universal medium, and its nature appears as the nature of currency – the universal medium under a commodity economy. Marx begins his discourse of Capital with a description of "commodity" in order to further his analysis of the peculiar function of human labor under capitalist production. In order to accomplish this, he initially posits the status that human labor as a medium for exchange already has permeated the whole economy, which is thereby totally commodified, as a completed status of the capitalist mode of production. He then embarks on an examination of the specific properties of this phenomenon.

Human labor as a commodity enables, by its nature, capital to produce surplus value. It is a primary property of human labor whereby its use value produces new (exchange) value. The use value of human labor has two dimensions: the physical, and the non-physical. The physical dimension is the aspect in which human

⁴⁴ In this paper, a detailed demonstration that *negativity III* (which is the impetus of history at the bottom of the movement of Spirit) can be identified with the intersubjective and social imagination of humans must be forgone for the sake of space. It has not been left undone. See *Appendix 2*.

beings process raw materials, handle tools, and/or control production equipment. The non-physical dimension is the ability as “living labor” to activate “dead labor”. This non-physical dimension of the use value of human labor makes the organic composition of capital function. This is the capacity to vitalize the stock of knowledge and technology already accumulated as the result of past human labor, and make it run as a system. This aspect of the use value of human labor – living labor – is changing its way of functioning as, according to Marx, the capitalist mode of production increases its level of completion from “co-operation” through “division of labor and manufacture” to “machinery and large-scale industry”⁴⁵. Through co-operation, the most advantageous effect of human labor is, above all, the organization of production by its “social character”. Human labor here performs its nature as “species-power [Gattungskräfte]”⁴⁶ by dramatically and efficiently enhancing production through cooperation. In the division of labor and manufacturing, individual labor specialized for particular skills functions as an organ of organized labor as a whole, in order to increase productivity even further. In large-scale industry, the “social character” of human labor is transferred into the machinery, which begins to operate itself as an autonomous system, and human labor comes to be subordinated to the machine system as a mere “living labor”.

Since the arrival of the era of large-scale industry, and the legal systems through which wage labor is developed, it becomes increasingly difficult for capital to produce absolute surplus value by means of a simple extension of the working day. Capitalists are forced to ratchet up the rate of surplus value by producing relative surplus value through more investments back into the constant capital. Then, a particular characteristic of the organic composition of capital, the composition of “variable capital” (labor power) and “constant capital” (raw materials and product equipment), becomes conspicuous. Capital is forced to work harder to increase capital value by reinvesting surplus value into constant capital in order to increase the rate of surplus value indirectly. Thus, eventually, the rate of surplus value can be increased only by a relative decrease in the value of labor (the cost of means of subsistence).

Why can capital produce surplus value by its organic composition in the first place? The “living labor” provided by wage laborers enable capitalists to handle “dead labor” – the products already produced in the past – as “commodities”. Capitalist means a kind of subject who’s eyes see all various kinds of goods as “commodities” – as products which include exchange value. The potential value that “dead labor” or the product has is vitalized or

revitalized, and is given additional value only through the production process – i.e., contact with “living labor”. The “commodity” which comes out of the production process appears to consumers as a product with fetish power – as product possessing “value”.

Why can the production process activate the value of a product, and add more value to it? This is because, in a commodified world, the following psychological mechanism is at work (even subconsciously, or unconsciously). Originally, the (exchange) value is the energy and effort required to produce a product. However, since it is not easy to evaluate the energy and effort uniformly, time consumed for production becomes a scale of value. A greatly cared for and elaborated product reminds a person who picks it up of the amount of time consumed in producing it, and his/her imagination allows products to exert a fetish allurements over them. It is thus a form of human imagination, the faculty to project one’s subjectivity to other’s subjectivity, which makes this condition possible. The dimension of inter-subjective imagination required to put oneself into someone’s position permits the fetish character of things. Thus, it is the essential characteristic of capitalist mode of production that the circulation process is always and already reflected on the production process⁴⁷.

The completion of this condition, in that one can evaluate the value of a product not by the value of another product but by “abstract time”⁴⁸ or currency as a universal medium, is achieved only after the ubiquitous presence of a specific form of human existence – wage laborers. Then, the value that a product has, i.e., the energy and effort consumed in its production, becomes the value as abstract time. So then, what exactly is a wage laborer? The wage laborer is a person who doesn’t have anything but his/her labor to contribute towards production. While the existence of the wage laborer itself will be “completed” along with the historical development of the capitalist mode of production, and whatever the concrete historical process of its establishment is, once the social existence of the wage laborer is universally established, the measurement of human labor by abstract time becomes settled.

Labor provided by the wage laborer is pure “living labor”. It gives life to the organic composition of capital. Yet, on the other hand, it is just an existence that gives life to the organic composition of capital, and it in itself cannot survive as an independent organism (which is quite ironic considering it is called “living”). Pure “living labor” is nothing other than “social character” which is a property of human labor in its purified form. It is originally a faculty for seeing the other’s labor in the “dead labor” – other’s products, and to enable individuals to exercise

⁴⁵ *Capital vol.I*, p. 439-639 (Chapter 13-15).

⁴⁶ Karl Marx, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* (1844), *Third Manuscript*, XXIII: “Critique of Hegel’s Dialectic and General Philosophy”.

⁴⁷ See also *Appendix 1*.

⁴⁸ Mosihe Postone, *Time, Labor, and Social Domination*. See also footnote 55.

cooperation and division of labor by a mutual exchange of viewpoints with others. The completed wage laborer, however, cannot recognize this ability in him/herself as a “social character” since he/she has already become pure “living labor”. The wage laborer thus ends up no more than a being that provides life to constant capital, being wholly subsumed in the organic composition of capital.

The power that “living labor” originally possessed, in other words, the “social character” of human labor, is not a kind of quality that can be calculated quantitatively with “abstract time”⁴⁹. The reason why capital can produce surplus value is that capital is exploiting the wage laborer by rendering this dimension of the “use value” of human labor to the exchange value by means of calculating it with the “value of labor” (value of the cost of subsistence). Certainly, individuals can survive as a living substance receiving the cost of means of subsistence, however, he/she is actually also providing for capitalists his/her own “living labor” to the organic composition of capital in exchange for the cost of subsistence in the form of a wage. It is possible to calculate the “value of labor” precisely because it is measured by the value of living necessities – the time consumed to produce them. This is supposed to be the (exchange) value of the labor – the value of a wage worker per se. This labor that capitalists seized in exchange of its exchange value, however, will increase productivity, and thereby decrease the exchange value of labor (the necessary time to maintain and reproduce labor). In other words, the use value of labor decreases the exchange value of labor, in the capitalist mode of production. Put simply, the productivity of the social character of human labor is actually going to reduce the necessary labor time to survive. In the capitalist mode of production, however, the potential surplus time which is supposed to appear is in reality added into the value of commodity as surplus value and thrown into the circulation process, and then, it flows back to capitalists in the form of money capital. Due to this mechanism of the relative surplus value production, money capital recaptured by capitalists will be reinvested into the constant capital. Thus what is potentially social surplus-time is accumulated socially in the form of the augmentation of constant capital. Marx phrases this in *Grundrisse* that time as “wealth”, which by right should be given back to laborers as the “disposable time”, is being transformed into surplus value and accumulated as constant capital (fixed capital) – mere material wealth.

From the standpoint of the direct production process it [the saving of labor time] can be regarded as the production of fixed capital, this fixed capital being man himself.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Kozo Uno, expressed it as the “impossibility of commodification of labor force”. In Uno’s theory, however, it is the cause of the crisis that is mainly pursued as the problem of quantitative demand and supply of labor, and the issue of qualitative transformation of labor (quantification) is neglected. See also *Appendix 3* at the end.

⁵⁰ *Grundrisse*, pp.711-712.

It seems that the “social character” of labor is working on itself self-referentially in a mechanism whereby human labor originally equipped with social character is transformed into abstract human labor; abstract time – a universal medium. This is yet another effect of the “social character” of labor. Marx argued that surplus value, which is the source of profit for capitalists, is absolutely produced in the production process; in the organic composition of capital, while volumes II and III of *Capital* are dedicated to depicting how the movement of the merchant and money capital, which acquire relative or apparent independency from the movement of the production capital, constitutionally disguise the truth – the secret of the production of surplus-value. That the origin of the surplus-value is absolutely the “living labor” subsumed in the organic composition of capital in the production process makes it invisible not only for proletariats, but also for capitalists themselves. The social character of human labor makes itself invisible by its reflexivity: its essential property. In other words, human labor per se reinforces the objectification of the “value” as abstract time, that is, the abstract quantification of its own social character, by accepting the result of the pricing process of surplus value as a given fact with its own reflexivity⁵¹.

This is the mechanism by which the “social character of labor” is subsumed as “living labor” into the organic composition of capital, and its qualitative sociality is appropriated as superfluous labor time for capital. Marx describes the trajectory of capital such as that capital continues to require the appropriation of “living labor” as the source of surplus value, while it keeps raising its organic composition for continuous production of surplus value, that is, increasing the ratio of constant capital, and thereby making direct human labor increasingly obsolete and unnecessary. Marx calls this a “contradiction” of capital⁵².

I shall not exercise here a closer examination of Marx’s prophetic logic that the revolution, i.e., the solution of contradiction, is necessarily brought out from the contradiction. Rather, I am more interested in how the trajectory of capital could impact the form of human subjectivity, especially its psychological and ethical condition (or, existential, if you prefer). In *Grundrisse*, Marx sketches a slightly more concrete vision of “a different subject” who is becoming liberated from production relations that are contradictory to the production forces – a man who is becoming released from the organic composition of capital and domination by

⁵¹ A theory of this process, though I shall not venture into it in this paper, could be developed further by using Lacan’s concept of the “symbolic castration” – the subsumption of *the imaginary* (and *the real*) by the *symbolic*.

⁵² *Capital volume III*, Penguin Books, p.366, p.372-373.

“value”⁵³. The living labor appropriated by capital will be transferred to machinery increasingly, and thereby direct human labor becomes less and less necessary. Marx unfolds his vision of a future society in which humans will enjoy more and more “disposable time”, the production process would no longer be a process to produce value, humans would not be necessary any more as providers of direct labor, and the individual would only step into the production process as a kind of free place to learn about the accumulated wealth of human beings (knowledge and technology) and further develop it.

The first key issue is whether a release of humans from direct labor actually results in a liberation from domination by value, and secondly, what exactly does liberation from domination by value mean? Marx states that the “labor capacity” of workers is becoming transferred into machines, and is becoming devalued in proportion as the rise of the organic composition of capital. As previously examined, the “labor capacity” of the laborer has both a physical dimension and a non-physical dimension – the dimension of “social character”. Both of these dimensions are becoming unnecessary for the production process, and discharged from it. But the problem is whether these dimensions becoming unnecessary for and liberated from the production process necessarily means the devaluation (breaking with the domination of value) of “labor capacity”. We confirmed that it is the dimension of “social character” of labor capacity that produces “value”. Thus the question is whether the “social character” of labor liberated from the production process really becomes released from domination by “value” either, and if it does, what then would happen.

The question is ultimately that even if the social imagination of humans as the dimension of human desire, namely, the constitutive power of the imaginary – negativity III – is liberated from the capitalist production process, will it be freed from the commodity space? And if so, in what kind of constitution will negativity III become subsumed after it is discharged from the commodity space? Without a doubt, “living labor” is becoming reduced from the organic composition of capital in terms of rate, although this per se does not necessarily mean the absolute decrease of the total amount of direct labor (variable capital). Does it, however, necessarily lead to the abolition of value-producing labor? And another question could be raised that even if humans are released from value-producing labor, is there any possibility that humans could continue to be dominated by “value”? Although it is certain that the place where value is produced is the production process, it is not necessarily only in the sphere of production that individuals accept domination of value. It is also in the sphere of circulation that we are dominated by value. Rather, in a developed capitalist society,

individuals make first contact with “value” and are influenced by it in their encounters with the commodity, i.e., through their consumption. The recognition of this idea can already be seen in Marx.

[T]heir consumption reproduces the individual himself in a specific mode of being, not only in his immediate quality of being alive, and in specific social relations. So that the ultimate appropriation by individuals taking place in the consumption process reproduces them in the original relations in which they move within the production process and towards each other; reproduces them in their social being, and hence reproduces their social being -- society -- which appears as much the subject as the result of this great total process.⁵⁴

Once a society is established in which the commodity globally penetrates as the universal medium, even if the rate of direct labor in the organic composition of capital is diminished, and becomes gradually absent from value production, as the expansion and development of the sphere of consumption, the subject will still continue to become increasingly more highly subsumed in commodity space. In a developed capitalist society, the “social character” of labor (i.e., negativity III) as the source of value production is becoming withdrawn from the sphere of production, and instead performed in the sphere of non-material labor (monitoring and regulation), luxuries and fashion consumption, the various culture industries, and the information and communication industries. In this development, it appears, on the surface, that the subject is still stuck in its domination by “value” domination by “abstract labor”.

5. A HISTORICALLY SPECIFIC FORM OF SOCIAL IMAGINATION

The rise of the organic composition of capital means, for the subject whose “social character of labor” (i.e., negativity III) is released from the sphere of production, a liberation from the social forms that constitute the constitution of his/her subjectivity so far. It is true that this is a liberation, but it is also an exile, in a way. The subsumption of negativity III to the capitalist mode of production, i.e., its transformation into abstract labor, has been the central axis of the social forms which organize subjectivity in a society which has accepted and developed the capitalist mode of production. The process of the formation of the organic composition of capital and its specific and dynamic trajectory is a historically-specific social process. Yet, at the same time, it is alone the process of history, precisely because history is a product of the modern capitalist society itself, and thereby a historically specific being. Thus the trajectory of the dynamic of capital pointing beyond itself is the trajectory toward the end of history.

Hegel never spoke about the future, but Marx

⁵³ *Grundrisse*, pp.703-704, p.705, p.708, p.712.

⁵⁴ *ibid.*, p. 717 (footnote).

did. What is the difference? Marx pointed out that the movement of capital itself is a contradiction, and includes negativity against itself, and he conceived of this negativity as the future. One might say that the way of thinking per se in that this negativity is formed into the future, or projected to the future, represents the western sense of time generated from Judeo-Christian eschatology. The problem of the domination of the time by capitalism⁵⁵ is certainly not only its abstracting aspect, but also the composition of the directional dynamic – time flowing directionally and linearly – from the negativity which is subsumed in the composition of capital. On this point, Hegel seems more cautious than Marx, if you read him carefully. Hegel acknowledges that history is a flow driven by the negativity of Spirit, and it is ultimately a story that is organized recursively by the abstract negativity of consciousness (i.e., negativity II) distilled from that flow itself. Thus Hegel supposedly did not talk about the future, since he was aware of its fictionality. But a limitation of Hegel may be found in the fact that he tried to avoid the precariousness of the narrativity of history: to fall into nihilism in an autotoxic fashion through the negativity, which it creates in itself, by means of glorifying the birth of Protestantism and German nations. This is not a solution to the problem, but a circulation, since he is seeking to advocate the process of history with historical phenomena. The most significant shortcoming of his method may be found in the following episode: within a hundred years after Hegel's death, a small island country in the Far East succeeded to modernize itself to the extent that it declared war against one of the most formidable European countries; the Russian Empire, yet it is impossible to find any significant effects of Protestantism in Japanese modernization and capitalization. The ethics of Protestantism might have been a matrix for the spirit of capitalism, but once the system of capitalism had become independent, it would proceed to reproduce the spirit of capitalism in any place it traveled to, regardless of Christianity. This phenomenon is the limitation of Hegel's theory, and can be elucidated and explained well by Marx's theory. Yet on the other hand, a reflection on negativities through Hegel's philosophy is required in order to examine just what would come at the end of the self-overcoming process of capital, or more precisely, after the dissolution of the organic composition of capital, since this entails imagining exactly what Marx's "disposable time" would actually appear as. Here the Hegelian insights on time, i.e., that time was originally not time but negativity, become indispensable.

Kojève narrowly concluded that the negativity at the

bottom of Hegel's thought was death. Nevertheless, his project to contemplate a relationship among death, labor, and history from Hegel indicates that he was trying to conceptualize the "human" at the end/beyond the process of modernity. Heidegger presumably came to be aware of the abyss of negativity III in Hegel, and it was then when he was forced to abandon his early project. He ran into the humanistic limitations of his own philosophy, in which he tried to grasp the understanding of Being by Dasein (human) as a future projective structure. He herewith stopped his writing of Being and Time. Kojève seems to have had a fair comprehension of this, though again, for him, the problem of negativity is ultimately the problem of death.

[T]he subject of the death in Hegel was taken up again by Heidegger. But since he disregarded the complementary subject of Struggles and Labor, his philosophy was not successful in explaining History—on the other hand, Marx maintains the subject of Struggles and Labor, and thus his philosophy is essentially of historicism. Yet, he disregarded the subject of the death (while totally admitting the mortality of human).⁵⁶

The world after history is the key issue for Kojève, instead of the future. He is obsessed with the concept of the death, ties Hegel's idea of negativity insistently to it, and seems to think that Marx abandoned Hegel's issue of negativity. This is the biggest shortcoming of Kojévian philosophy. Death in itself is just physical extinction. Death itself as physical disappearance is just the same dimension as negativity I, i.e., the negativity of the object, and is irrelevant to the essence of human spirit. The issue here is the human idea of death, that is, the imagination of death, which is what makes us human. That is the dimension of negativity III. Kojève also does not disaggregate technically negativity II, that is, the simple negation of the natural world, and negativity III, that is, the sphere of creative and human action. Negativity III is not only a dimension of the imagination of death, but also a dimension of erotic phantasy, and this is the insight of Bataille – the limit-point where consciousness is lost, and where self-consciousness comes from⁵⁷. Thus it is not impossible, indeed, rather reasonable, to reinterpret death in Kojève's philosophy as negativity III, that is, the negation of the consciousness and the birthplace of the self-consciousness. It is the origin of Marx's "social character" of labor. This would bring a true complementary reconciliation of Hegel and Marx, and then Heidegger would, in the end, be unnecessary.

Kojève later became conscious of the possibility that the human being of post-history could not be a mere regression to nature. Interestingly, he added a footnote to the second edition of his writing based on his impressions

⁵⁵ Moishe Postone, *Time, Labor, and Social Domination*. Postone's central theme in his book is to indicate the subsumption of society by the capitalist mode of production as a form of social domination by abstract labor as abstract time, which is generated as the means for varolization process of capital.

⁵⁶ Alexandre Kojève, *Introduction à la lecture de Hegel*, p. 575. Translated by the author. This part is not included in the English abbreviated translation by James H. Nichols, Jr [1969].

⁵⁷ See also *Appendix 2* at the end of this paper.

of travel in Japan in 1959. In this footnote, he argues that there is a possibility of the constitution of a human society that is post-human, post-labor, i.e., post-history, but yet not an animal world. He saw a unique microcosm in 1950's Japan in which people did not have any religion, ethics, or politics in any European and/or historic way, but still not in any natural nor animalistic way. He predicted that the "interaction between Japan and the Western World will finally lead not to a rebarbarization of the Japanese but to a "Japanization" of the Westerners (including the Russians)"⁵⁸. Yet, while Marx always examined issues on the basis of an analysis of a historically specific mode of the economy, Kojève discarded all of Marx's efforts and heritage in his philosophy of death. It is conceivable now to examine the issue of detachment of "form" and "content" (i.e., the problem of Japanization) Kojève advocated as a problem of dissolution of the organic composition of capital: the release of variable capital from the capitalist mode of production; or: the dissolution of symbolic castration, the cancellation of subordination of the imaginary under the symbolic, based on Marx's analysis of the historic trajectory of capital.

Since the oil crisis of 1973 and 1979, developed countries have entered an age of general overproduction. Investments into new technology, land, housing, and other money commodities have been tried and exercised in various ways in order to raise the organic composition of capital. In many developed countries, the number of non-productive population, termed "NEET"⁵⁹, is currently increasing. Notably, the following phenomenon have come to coexist: a certain percentage of the non-productive population which does not participate in the sphere of production and depends on already accumulated wealth, and, domination by value with the extreme development of the commodity sphere. This must have a certain effect on our subjectivities. In Japan, the suicide rate increased, especially after the collapse of the Japanese asset price bubble (between 1986 to 1991). This especially true for middle-aged and elderly males, who were not, so it is said, able to adapt themselves to the changing social environment after the collapse of the long dominant socio-economic mode of production since 1940's⁶⁰. Many in the

younger generation are becoming "Freeters"⁶¹, "NEETs", "Hikikomori"⁶², "Parasite Singles"⁶³, jobless university graduates, and graduate students who have no chance to get a career-based form of employment⁶⁴. As previously stated, there are great concerns about their growing sense of stagnation in society. In European countries and in the United States, there is a tendency in that the problem of surplus labor population emerges as an issue of discrimination, or disparity, by class, race, faith, and language, and is recognized and addressed according to such indications. On the other hand, there seems to be a tendency in Asian countries, such as Japan, Korea, and Taiwan, to recognize this as a problem of the generation of pure surplus-labor population, because of the relatively high homogeneity of society. In Japan's case, it is notable that the progress of the liberation/exile from value-creating labor is highly visible in its pure form as the result of: growing overseas outsourcing, a high rate of replacement of direct human labor with industrial robots, the declining birthrate and aging population, the ongoing severe employment situation, and the shortage of social liquidity mainly caused by ossified hiring customs. It is a distinctive characteristic of contemporary Japanese society that the change of the organic composition of capital since 1970 is eliciting a peculiar development of the imaginary character in commodity space. Negativity III, which was once in the form of social character of labor, has been unleashed into the extraordinarily developed sphere of consumption, such as fashion, pop/idol music, various genres of subculture (manga, anime, light novels, video games), etc. It is difficult to find signs of revolutionary movement, or the appearance of a revolutionary subject, even while feelings of social stagnation are swelling.

A leading Japanese cultural critic from the younger generation, Hiroki Azuma (a Derridean), explains the rise of otaku⁶⁵ cultures (subcultures) with the term

the Wartime Economy", *The American Economic Review*, Vol. 88, No. 2, May, 1998. (<http://www.jstor.org/pss/116956>)

⁶¹ "Freeter is a Japanese expression for people between the ages of 15 and 34 who lack full time employment or are unemployed (excluding housewives and students)." (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Freeter>)

⁶² "Hikikomori is a Japanese term which refers to the phenomenon of reclusive people who have chosen to withdraw from social life, often seeking extreme degrees of isolation and confinement because of various personal and social factors in their lives." (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hikikomori>)

⁶³ "Parasite single is a Japanese term for a single person who lives with their parents until their late twenties or early thirties in order to enjoy a carefree and comfortable life." (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parasite_single)

⁶⁴ Graduates and graduate students tend to lose their best chance to get jobs at major companies in Japan because of the persistence of an idiosyncratic Japanese recruiting custom, known as the "simultaneous recruiting of new graduates." (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simultaneous_recruiting_of_new_graduates)

⁶⁵ "Otaku is a Japanese term used to refer to people with obsessive interests, particularly anime, manga, or video games." (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Otaku>)

⁵⁸ Alexandre Kojève, *Introduction to the reading of Hegel: Lectures on the Phenomenology of Spirit*, translated by James H. Nichols, Jr [1969], Cornell University Press, 1980, p.161-162 [Footnote].

⁵⁹ "NEET is a term coined by the govt. to describe people currently "Not in Education, Employment, or Training". It was first used in the United Kingdom, but its use has spread to other countries, including Japan, China, and South Korea." (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/NEET>)

⁶⁰ There is a widely received theory, the so-called "1940 System" advanced by Yukio Noguchi, one of the most famous ex-bureaucrat economist in Japan. According to Noguchi, the Japanese economic system, including the "convoy method"—a bureaucrat-lead monetary system, had basically not changed since its establishment in the 1940s, all the way through to the 1990s (with Japanese WWII defeat in 1945 having no impact), until the crash of the Japanese asset price bubble. Yukio Noguchi, "The 1940 System: Japan under

“animalization”⁶⁶. Although his theory has numerous merits as a study of culture and representation, it fails to make, in the same manner as S. Žižek and J. Butler, in principle, any definite distinctions between corporeal desire (animal nature) and imaginative desire (the dimension of human desire, or negativity III). Accordingly, Azuma inadvertently reduces the problem of Japanese snobbism, which Kojève distinguished from American animalism (as one of two possible modes of human being of post-modern era), into a form of “cynicism (against modernity)”. He also argues that Japan will be equally “animalized” along with the U.S. after it passes through its transitional stage of cynicism. In his theory, the particularity of the rise of the imaginative domain in contemporary Japan is explained only with psychoanalytic mechanisms (such as “repression” or “psychological trauma”) that come from the Meiji Restoration (1868) and Japan’s defeat in WWII (1945) – the consequence is that any sort of socio-historical theoretical frame is not provided by Azuma. In the first place, Kojève’s idea of “snobbism” as such was just a comment on a footnote, inspired by his trip to Japan in 1950’s, and its conceptual definition is indeed not clearly elaborated. It seems that Kojève had an insight from his observation of Japanese society and culture that a human condition in which some human negativity is still retained while having already stepped out of the forms of Human or History à la the West is possible. The challenge for us remains in developing this insight on the basis of our reading of Hegel-Marx to reroute it back to the theory of the dimension of human desire (or negativity III) which Kojève himself originally found. Though we cannot fully elaborate it here, based on the hitherto developed consideration in this paper, it should be a theory elucidating in what mode the negativity brewed in the composition of social forms of capitalist modernity (i.e., the organic composition of capital) would appear when it is liberated from that composition as such. In this view, in terms of the end of modernity (i.e., the end of history), Kojève’s theories are overly Hegelian (rather than Marxian), as are Azuma’s, who is overly Kojèvean; both lack a social theory of what kind of socio-historical constitution is generating History, and how the end of this “History” is to come about.

Though I indeed argued in the course of this discussion the importance of coming back to the Hegelian knowledge of negativity, Marxian theory is crucially important at the same time, since it can help answer by what kind of social forms human negativity is constituted to generate modernity, capitalism, and history. The amalgamation of Hegel and Marx this way would enable us to graduate

from a cultural and representational theory that is always fixating on and interpreting “edgy” and extreme cultural events or problems of subjectivity as a picture of the whole, and then, instead, to move up to a social theory which understands such events as *a specific part* of a whole structure.

Certainly the appropriation of direct human labor (variable capital) by Japanese capital is being exercised outside the borders of Japan, while domestic prosperity in the imaginary sphere continues. Examining the global movement of international capital, the organic composition of capital is maintained as a whole. Here, cross-border expansion and transition of capital proceeds, but the domestic labor force does not freely enjoy such mobility. What this means is that people in a developed country like Japan are becoming liberated from the organic composition of capital, but meanwhile remain under the domination of value in the commodity sphere, since the organic composition as a global whole of capital remains. In such a geo-social-economic matrix, social imagination (negativity III) itself runs idle. It does not work towards social productivity, but instead forms cultural phantasms. The condition of the “end of the history” that Kojève once envisioned as yet to come has turned out to be exactly this historically specific phenomenon of the trajectory of capital in contemporary east Asia.

I would now like to posit the following hypothesis on the sense of stagnation and hopelessness in contemporary Japan. Due to the rise of the organic composition of capital, the social character of labor is formed and developed not only in terms of the mental aspects of labor, but also as a source of social and historic imagination, in accordance with the development of capitalism. However, in a region (Japan) where geographical movement of labor force over its borders does not occur, instead of being exercised as a social and historic imagination toward a hopeful future vision, this faculty is fulfilled as: romantic imagination which goes introspectively, to a further dive into the interiority; or retrospectively, toward a nostalgic beautification of the past. An expression of this is the rise of the sphere of subculture in Japanese society. Thus, the social character of labor, liberated from the production sphere, is turned into to cultural consumption, and, as a result, subjects still cannot freely emerge from a commodity space dominated by value. This accounts for their lack of hope.

Hardt/Negri argued that the geographical movement of workers is an essential factor for an emancipation of potentiality of multitude, and applaud the migrations of workers.

Mass migrations have become necessary for production. Every path is forged, mapped, and traveled. It seems that the more intensely each is traveled and the more suffering is deposited there, the more each path becomes productive. These paths are what bring the “earthly city” out of the cloud and confusion that Empire casts over it. This is how the multitude gains the power

⁶⁶ Hiroki Azuma, *Dobutsuka suru posutomodan: otaku kara mita nihon shakai*, Kodansha Gendai Shinsho, 2001 (English trans. *Otaku: Japan's Database Animals*, University of Minnesota Press, 2009). See also “The Animalization of Otaku Culture”, *Mechademia* 2, 2007, p.175-188.

to affirm its autonomy, traveling and expressing itself through an apparatus of widespread, transversal territorial reappropriation.⁶⁷

On the whole, the flow of Japanese migration remains weak. Granted, there has been an increase in the number of young people who enter universities abroad from countries like South Korea and Taiwan (which share many characteristics in common with Japan, such as: a high degree of development in the technological and information industries, a scarcity of natural resources, and limited size of territory), but Japanese university students are said to be increasingly inactive in recent years due to anxiety related to the uncertain prospects of the domestic economy. Company workers also tend, more than in the past, to avoid overseas assignments for the same reason. The government still maintains tightly controlled, non-progressive, immigration policies. Does the cause of the immobility of Japanese labor force originate in: language difficulties, geographical isolation, a history of closed-door policies, or Japan's defeat in WWII? This paper will not venture further into a sociological analysis of the social and psychological factors that prevent Japan from pursuing more progressive forms of migration (both emigrating to other countries, and accepting immigrants to Japan). However, it remains clear that Japan remains an obdurate historical locality or specificity that Hardt/Negri are incapable of handling, due to their lack of a robust principle theory.

6. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The conclusion of this paper is not to propose to young people in Japan a simple general solution (such as “go abroad!”). While some support neoliberalism and the attendant promotion of liquidity and abolition of the “nationality” of labor force and capital in order to revive the central economy in Japan, others in contrast are looking towards (for example) community-rebuilding as a new form of society in this era of slow economic growth. What I mean by a “robust principle theory” is one which is able to clearly articulate that both of these seemingly opposite arguments and policies are indeed contained within a single common structure in that they are both trying to point out the problem of the re-appropriation or re-subsumption of our socio-historical imagination, which is being liberated from the highly-advanced organic composition of capital. More than anything, such a theory is what is most needed from social theory.

It seems to me possible to extract a principle theory⁶⁸ of transformation of subjectivity in the trajectory of capital

from Marx's theory. (Japan's case is here shown as an illustrative example.⁶⁹) In this paper, every effort has been made to avoid reverting to a Messianic vision, like Hardt/Negri (and Žižek), or just following up changes in society with “critique” without actually treating the phenomenon critically, like Azuma. Indeed, until now, a theory on the nature of negativity, that is, the drive of history, and on the historical and social forms that subsume it, has been sorely lacking. This paper will serve as an experimental demonstration of this possibility, tracking back to Hegel's negativity, that Marx's theory on the organic composition of capital also potentially contains the dimension of a principle theory of the transformation of subjectivity.

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⁶⁷ Hardt and Negri, *ibid.*, p, 398.

⁶⁸ See also *Appendix 3* to know how this principle theory is different from a “principle theory” of Kozo Uno.

⁶⁹ Anne Allison, a cultural anthropologist specializing in contemporary Japanese society and culture, also points out that a relationship among Japanese socioeconomic background, social-psychological sense of stagnation (hopelessness, precarious mind), and mass-produced fantasies could be regarded as a precursory symptom for developed capitalist countries. See Anne Allison, *Precarious Japan*, Duke University Press, 2013.

APPENDIXES

Appendix 1

Generally speaking, the secret of the formation of the capitalist contradiction and development of the process of valorization may be found in the penetration of the circulation process into the production process. Thus, it is conceivable that someone might imagine he can initiate liberation from this contradiction by an interception of this penetration. Kojin Karatani tried to realize this idea. His revolutionary activities were planned to prevent the penetration of circulation into the production process on the front lines by means of introduction of a local currency (NAM), which would circulate initially within the intellectual community. Putting aside the practical problems of this project for now, a significant theoretical problem is that Karatani understands capitalist contradiction as a contradiction between the processes of production and circulation. In contrast, Moishe Postone (University of Chicago) provides an alternative interpretation of contradiction in *Capital*, in which contradiction does not arise between the processes of circulation and production, but within the production process alone. According to this Postonean interpretation, Marx actually discussed the circulation and reproduction process of capital (or merchant capital and monetary capital) in his manuscripts of the second and third volume of *Capital*, but this was only to demonstrate how the appearance of the circulation and reproduction process covers and obscures the essence of the dynamic and contradictory self-movement of the production process (industrial capital) *per se*. This paper is founded on this interpretation. The contradiction of capitalism is that while capital promotes a rise of the organic composition of capital, or a relative reduction of variable capital through technological innovations, it continuously requires a subsumption of direct labor under its organic composition as a source of surplus value. I argued above that the production process is, in capitalism, penetrated by the circulation process. I hold that this penetration is not a sort of phenomenon which is reversible after its formation. In fact, the relationship between production and circulation process in capitalism is separable only by conceptual articulation, and it is impossible to unravel its fabric of interactive formation process, which is woven through the real process of history, back into single threads. Metaphorically speaking, it would be far easier to extract a drop of dye from a glass of water into which it has been diluted. Once formed, the capitalist production process is essentially and intrinsically permeated by the circulation process, and it has become a self-moving process, having internalized the latter. Or, it can conversely be said that the circulation process has its existence only when it is extracted conceptually from the capitalist production process, and thus any attempt to hypostatize it and

separate it from the production process is fundamentally misguided. Therefore, if a revolution is possible, it should be a revolution of the production process *per se*. In other words, it should be an overcoming of the social constitution of the organic composition of capital. This very idea is the thrust of Marx's *Capital*. Thus, from this point of view, a mutual-permeation of production and circulation process originates from the double character of human labor, which is that it has two dimensions (of a material and social character), and it appears as the double character of commodity. The double character of labor is the source of the double character of commodity, and not the other way around. The reason Marx started with a discussion of the double character of commodity at the beginning of *Capital* vol.1 and then mentioned the strange phenomenon of "salto mortale" is that he adopted a particular method of phenomenology that begins with a phenomenon, and then traces back to the mechanism of its development. In this view, Karatani's attempt to overcome the duality of labor by the dissolution of the duality of currency as a representative of commodities is obviously a non-Marxist one. Of course, Karatani himself was aware of the non-Marxist character of his own thought and project, since he labeled himself a Proudhonist.

Appendix 2

I pursued the problem of negativity III from another point of view in my doctoral dissertation: "Organism and the Element of 'Earth': An Interpretation of the Idea of Organism in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*" (2007: Waseda University)⁷⁰. In this examination, both alongside the construction of *Phenomenology* itself, and from outside it, I undertook to interpret the nature of the element of "Earth", which appears in the discourse of *Phenomenology* several times in a significant and peculiar way. The element of Earth seems to possess negativity sufficient to metamorphose the nature of consciousness, and therefore, it is something different from consciousness itself and is, at the same time, not any element from the natural world, since, as we have seen, any natural elements cannot resist the negativity of consciousness, and are to be penetrated by it, according to Hegel. This element of Earth seems to have an impenetrability, which cannot be appropriated instantly or fully by the negativity of consciousness. In short, the element of Earth is something between consciousness and nature, or a kind of dimension in-between the spiritual and the material. This element of Earth, in my interpretation, represents Hegel's

⁷⁰ This work was published with the title: "Ishiki to Seimei: Hegel Seishin-Genshou-Gaku ni okeru yuukitai to 'chi' no eremento wo meguru kousatsu [Consciousness and Life: An Interpretation of the Idea of Organism and the Element of 'Earth' in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*]" (Shakai-Hyouronsha, 2010). Currently available only in Japanese. The author was awarded the 2011 HAJ (Hegel Association Japan) Prize for his achievements, including this publication.

negativity III. Hegel himself, oddly enough, did not offer any explanation about what it really is. It appears suddenly at several turning points of Phenomenology, without any further justification. I examined all of appearances related to the element of Earth, and investigated the way it functions in the structure of Phenomenology. I concluded that the element of Earth is one dimension of human mind—something in the human mind associated with characters as non-natural, non-conscious, non-reasonable, vital, and female. Interpreted apart from Hegel per se, it could be identified with Kojève's "dimension of human desire"—a dimension of assimilation, Lacan's "the imaginary"—the desire for the Other's desire, Adorno/Horkheimer's dimension of "mimesis"—the power of prehistoric magic, Takaaki Yoshimoto's dimension of "Tsui-Gensou"—reciprocal fantasy⁷¹. This dimension, called by the name of Earth, plays its role at the significant turning points of Hegel's Phenomenology, for example, at the transition from Consciousness to Self-Consciousness and also from Reason to Spirit, though its most remarkable work is seen at the section of the Observation of the organic in the chapter of Reason. "The organic" is explained as a phenomenon constituted by human mind, which holds unconsciously the element of Earth at the bottom of itself. My point here is that Hegel had already attempted to criticize and deconstruct the idea of the "organic" at the beginning of nineteenth century, regarding it as a phenomenon of Spirit using the method of phenomenology. In doing this, Hegel inadvertently inserted the element of Earth when he felt the consciousness need to encounter something that would be impenetrable by his negativity. The conclusion of my doctoral thesis is that this element of Earth represents the non-natural, the spiritual negativity, in Hegel's philosophical constitution in Phenomenology. Capturing the Earth in Hegel's Phenomenology as such, we can see that something different from both human reason (Kant) and primordial nature (Schelling) is working at the core of

Hegel's thought as the ground which brings about the movement of Spirit. Thus, Hegel, who took a unique line, maintaining a distance from both Kantian rational theory of organism and Romantic naturalistic theory of organism, came to find, as a result, the organic as society, which is neither reasonable nor natural. At the same time, Hegel faithfully inherited the Kantian method of transcendental philosophy; he analytically regards "the organic" as a "phenomenon" that the multilayered constitution of the human mind brings about, not as a kind of primordial being outside the human. Hegel carried out a Kantian project of transcendental subject by his "consciousness" and went even further than Kant by understanding even faculties in humans, such as Perception, Understanding, and Reason as a "phenomenon". This point of view enables Hegel's consciousness to see or sense something negative against it in itself. By introducing a phenomenological methodology in which Hegel sets up this kind of point of view as a leading character of discourse, he could attain a unique position from which he could criticize both Kantian and Romantic theory of organism in Phenomenology. The vector in the latter half of Phenomenology actually shows his tendency toward logic as a metaphysics, which is later explicitly written (Science of Logic, 1812-16). This is exactly the opposite direction of the later Schelling, who went into a project to see positively something primordial at the bottom of nature, reason, spirit, or life. Hegel simply suggested something non-conscious and negative against conscious, in a negative way, which works at the bottom of consciousness. He showed that the interaction of the conscious and the non-conscious generates a variety of modes of human consciousness (a form of consciousness which sees an organism in nature is one of them), and then he moved toward a conceptual framework of a metaphysics whereby the trajectory of movement of consciousness is abstracted into the categories of logic and existence. The core of the organic phenomenon—which is called the element of Earth—is left as a blank. In the 20th century, Georges Bataille in *Inner Experience* (1943) conceived that it is the dimension of communion with others—sympathy, la communication—that Hegel placed at the bottom of his philosophy and depended on, but ran away from, eventually. Bataille compared it to the "earth" and also called it the "extreme limit" where the self is lost. He admires Hegel, saying that Hegel could touch upon this holy limit of ecstasy, while condemning Hegel for turning away from it. All of Hegel's efforts to build up a system or history were done out of an attempt to escape from this limit, Bataille penetratingly observed⁷². On the other hand, Eugen Fink in *Sein und Mensch* (1977) refuted Heidegger, who criticized Hegel's concept of experience as too subjective and self-conscious and also

⁷¹ In Japan, Takaaki Yoshimoto (1924-2012), who is a famous poet, literary critic, and philosopher, has already set forth his original theory in his work *Kyodo Gensou Ron* in 1968, inspired by Hegel and early Marx, in which the domain of "Tsui-Gensou" (reciprocal fantasy) is observed at work in the fundamental layer of Japanese social construction since mythological times. The power of the state comes into existence at the occasion that this realm – interpersonal and spiritual erotic fantasy – is incorporated into the symbolic system of society called "Kyoudou Gensou" (communal fantasy). The zenith of his theory is that this domain of "Tsui-Gensou" is still functioning in a much more overt way in Japan, despite Japan's apparent successful modernization, than in Western society. It is interesting that Yoshimoto's theory explains much of the essential characteristics and unique aspects of Japanese culture and social habitus, although he doesn't employ mature Marx's method of historical analysis on social forms but a method much closer to romanticism. Yet another interesting fact is that his book *Kyodo Gensou Ron* is said to be one of the publications which had the greatest ideological influence on 1968 generation in Japan. Takaaki Yoshimoto, *Kyodo Gensou Ron* (1968), Kadokawa Bunko Sophia, 1982.

⁷² Georges Bataille, *Inner Experience* (1943), translated by Leslie Anne Boldt, State University of New York Press, 1988, p.41, 78.

discussed that Hegelian philosophy lacks the moment of “Earth”⁷³. It is, however, Heidegger himself that is incapable of feeling and seeing into the element of Earth at the bottom of Hegel’s philosophy, according to Fink. Fink argued that there is the Earth—something impenetrable for human thinking in Hegel’s concept of experience or existence in a speechless and hidden way. Heidegger tries to locate Hegel’s philosophy at the summit of the history of the forgetting of being, and the completion of modern metaphysics. Fink, however, insisted that Hegel is not yet beyond modern metaphysics, and that he is attempting to reconstruct metaphysics between the ancient and modern eras. In this regard, Hegel has the same ontological motif of human experience as Heidegger, though the directionalities of both are, in some ways, different. What, Michel Foucault argued, was enclosed and oppressed by “bio-politique” in modern society after the 19th century is—though Foucault never talked about it directly till the very end of his life—the very self-same negativity III, I would say, that sparkles as a symbol of Earth in Hegel’s *Phenomenology*. The worshiping of the vital that has been repeated from Bergson to Negri/Hardt is nothing but an attempt to enshrine this negativity III in a transhistorical way. In contrast, it is early Marx that grasped the most appropriately the true identity of Hegel’s negativity III. He put an emphasis on this negative dimension as a “species-life (*Gattungsleben*)”, which is different from nature and also precedent to consciousness. Marx discussed in *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* (1844) a two-stage process of alienation: first, an alienation from nature itself, and then, an alienation from human nature. The human being is alienated from nature itself as a result of the formation of a sphere of species-life as his own constitution, and living there. “The animal is immediately one with its life activity. It does not distinguish itself from it. It is its life activity. Man makes his life activity itself the object of his will and of his consciousness. He has conscious life activity. It is not a determination with which he directly merges. Conscious life activity distinguishes man immediately from animal life activity. It is just because of this that he is a species-being. Or it is only because he is a species-being that he is a conscious being, i.e., that his own life is an object for him. Only because of that is his activity free activity. Estranged labor reverses the relationship, so that it is just because man is a conscious being that he makes his life activity, his essential being, a mere means to his existence.”⁷⁴ Humans broke with nature as a result of the

constitution of their species-life, and have become one large consciousness, which enables humans to objectify nature. Then, individual consciousnesses were generated through alienated labor, which enabled humans to be on a stage where they can objectify society. If we compare it with the constitution of Hegel’s *Phenomenology*, Marx considers, in a reversed way, that “The Ethical Life (Ethical World)” is firstly formed, and then a relationship of “Lordship and Bondage” is experienced, which produces a “Consciousness”. Although early Marx had not yet thought of a social and historical form of objectification of labor, it was his great success to be able to talk about Hegel’s negativity III in a positive way, differing from Schelling.

Appendix 3

Kozo Uno, who is a Japanese economist and is considered to be one of the most important theorists in the field of Marx’s theory of value, developed an original framework within which to interpret Capital known as “Uno riron (Uno theory)”. He argued that it is essential to distinguish studies which deal with the extraction of a pure form of the dynamic trajectory of capital from Marx’s narration in *Capital*, from studies which deal with specific forms in the realization of the capitalist mode of production in various historically specific situations; the former is a principle theory of pure capitalism (his priority concern) and the latter is a general theory of historical development of capitalism and an analytical theory of present details of the capitalist economy. A central motivation of Uno’s theory is presumably in both a) understanding objectively our mode of being through an elucidation of the fundamental logic of the development of capital, which is a process of history per se, and b) the establishment of a method to handle the concrete social situations in which it is actually developed. Uno considered that the movement of capital cannot produce labor force in itself, and therefore it depends on externals to the system for the supply of labor force. This is termed the impossibility (difficulty) of the commodification of the labor force. This externality of the labor force is considered to be a root of contradiction of capitalism, and a cause of economic crisis⁷⁵. However, as I noted in footnote 49, a quantitative balance of supply and demand of labor force is the key for Uno, as it is the cause of crisis, and thereby the problem of qualitative transformation of labor (quantification of labor) is beyond the scope of his consideration. Uno does not take up the question of the qualitative determination of labor, i.e., what is labor in the first place? The “pure capitalism”, which is his theoretically perfect example of capitalism, regulates for itself the supply amount of labor force by maintaining a rotation of crisis and boom. In this way,

⁷³ Martin Heidegger, *The Basic Writings*, “The Origin of the Work of Art. (1935–1936)”, Eng. trans. David Farrell Krell. Revised and expanded ed. Harper Collins, 2008, p.139–212.

⁷⁴ Karl Marx, *Ökonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte: Heft I*, Karl Marx Werke/Artikel/Entwürfe März 1843 bis August 1844 [MEGA, Erste Abteilung, Bd.2], Dietz Verlag, 1982, S.240–241. (Eng. trans. by Martin Mulligan, 1959: [http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/](http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1844/manuscripts/labour.htm)

[works/1844/manuscripts/labour.htm](http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1844/manuscripts/labour.htm))

⁷⁵ Kozo Uno, *Principles of Political Economy. Theory of a Purely Capitalist Society*. Translated by Thomas T. Sekine. Brighton, 1980.

for Uno, capitalism is a system which has internalized the outside, and thereby will never collapse in its pure form. This is in total opposition to Marx's idea that capital necessarily proceeds on a trajectory toward self-collapse. Further, Uno's externality of labor power remains the quantitative determination, and the relation between the accumulation (constant capital) and the qualitative transformation of human labor is not considered. In these terms, Moishe Postone's theory, which elucidates

the relation of the quantification of human labor and the trajectory of capital in faithful accordance with Marx's logic, seems to grasp more profoundly the project of Capital than Uno's theory, since the superiority of Marx's theory is found in the fact that it is a theory of subjectivity, as well as a theory of the objective dimension of social forms. Based on this acknowledgement, this paper suggests a principle theory of transformation of subjectivity in the trajectory of capital.

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